DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 425 261 UD 032 678

TITLE	Behavior Problems: What's a School To Do?
INSTITUTION	California Univ., Los Angeles. Center for Mental Health in Schools.
SPONS AGENCY	Health Resources and Services Administration (DHHS/PHS), Washington, DC. Maternal and Child Health Bureau.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	8p.; Feature article from the newsletter, "Addressing Barriers to Learning" (vol.2, #2), of the Clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools of the University of California, Los Angeles.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavior Problems; *Classroom Techniques; *Discipline; Elementary Secondary Education; *Interpersonal Competence; Problem Solving; School Safety; Self Control; *Student Motivation; Training
IDENTIFIERS	Control (Social Behavior)

ABSTRACT

To deal with behavior problems and create safe environments, schools increasingly have adopted social control practices. These include discipline and classroom management practices that analysts see as blaming the victim and modeling behavior that fosters, rather than counters, the development of negative values. To move beyond overreliance on punishment and social control strategies, there is ongoing advocacy of social skills training and new agenda for emotional skills training and character education. The suppression of undesired acts does not necessarily lead to desired behavior. Programs to improve social skills and interpersonal problem solving have been described as having promise both for prevention and correction, but studies to date indicate that only a limited range of skills have been acquired and that the generalizability and maintenance of these skills have been poor. Beyond discipline and skills training, there is a need to address the roots of misbehavior and the underlying motivational bases for such behavior. The aims of programs to address motivational issues are to: (1) prevent and overcome negative attitudes toward schools and learning; (2) enhance motivational readiness for learning and overcoming problems; (3) maintain intrinsic motivation throughout learning and problem solving; and (4) nurture the type of continuing motivation that results in students engaging in activities away from school that foster the maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning and problem solving. Alternative strategies to improve motivation should create greater feelings of self-determination, competence, and relatedness than usually result from the youngsters' deviant actions. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

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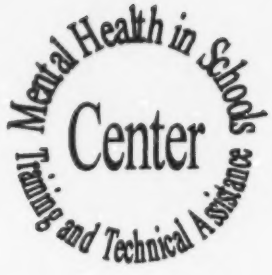

*From the Center's Clearinghouse ...**

A Feature Article from Our Newsletter
Addressing Barriers to Learning (Vol. 2, #2)

Behavior Problems: What's a School to Do?

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Support comes in part from the Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health.

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UD030678

Addressing Barriers to Learning

New ways to think . . .

Better ways to link

The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping old ones.
John Maynard Keynes

Behavior Problems: What's a School to Do?

In their effort to deal with deviant and devious behavior and create safe environments, schools increasingly have adopted social control practices. These include some *discipline* and *classroom management* practices that analysts see as "blaming the victim" and modeling behavior that fosters rather than counters development of negative values.

To move schools beyond overreliance on punishment and social control strategies, there is ongoing advocacy for social skills *training* and new agendas for *emotional "intelligence" training* and *character education*. Relatedly, there are calls for greater home involvement, with emphasis on enhanced parent responsibility for their children's behavior and learning. More comprehensively, some reformers want to transform schools through creation of an atmosphere of "caring," "cooperative learning," and a "sense of community." Such advocates usually argue for schools that are holistically-oriented and family-centered. They want curricula to enhance values and character, including responsibility (social and moral), integrity, self-regulation (self-discipline), and a work ethic and also want schools to foster self-esteem, diverse talents, and emotional well-being.

Discipline

Misbehavior disrupts; it may be hurtful; it may disinhibit others. When a student misbehaves, a natural reaction is to want that youngster to experience and other students to see the consequences of misbehaving. One hope is that public awareness of consequences will deter subsequent problems. As a result, the primary intervention focus in schools usually is on *discipline* -- sometimes embedded in the broader concept of *classroom management*. More broadly, however, as outlined on p. 2, interventions for misbehavior can be conceived in terms of:

- efforts to prevent and anticipate misbehavior
- actions to be taken during misbehavior
- steps to be taken afterwards.

From a prevention viewpoint, there is widespread awareness that program improvements can reduce learning and behavior problems significantly. It also is recognized that the application of consequences is an insufficient step in preventing future misbehavior.

For youngsters seen as having emotional and behavioral disorders, disciplinary practices tend to be described as strategies to modify deviant behavior. And, they usually are seen as only one facet of a broad intervention agenda designed to treat the youngster's disorder. It should be noted, however, that for many students diagnosed as having disabilities the school's (and society's) socialization agenda often is in conflict with providing the type of helping interventions such youngsters require. This is seen especially in the controversies over use of corporal punishment, suspension, and exclusion from school. Clearly, such practices, as well as other value-laden interventions, raise a host of political, legal, and ethical concerns.

Unfortunately, too many school personnel see punishment as the only recourse in dealing with a student's misbehavior. They use the most potent negative consequences available to them in a desperate effort to control an individual and make it clear to others that acting in such a fashion is not tolerated. Essentially, short of suspending the

Intervention Focus in Dealing with Misbehavior

I. Preventing Misbehavior

A. Expand Social Programs
1. Increase economic opportunity for low income groups
2. Augment health and safety prevention and maintenance (encompassing parent education and direct child services)
3. Extend quality day care and early education

B. Improve Schooling
1. Personalize classroom instruction (e.g., accommodating a wide range of motivational and developmental differences)
2. Provide status opportunities for nonpopular students (e.g., special roles as assistants and tutors)
3. Identify and remedy skill deficiencies early

C. Follow-up All Occurrences of Misbehavior to Remedy Causes
1. Identify underlying motivation for misbehavior
2. For unintentional misbehavior, strengthen coping skills (e.g., social skills, problem solving strategies)
3. If misbehavior is intentional but reactive, work to eliminate conditions that produce reactions (e.g., conditions that make the student feel incompetent, controlled, or unrelated to significant others)
4. For proactive misbehavior, offer appropriate and attractive alternative ways the student can pursue a sense of competence, control, and relatedness
5. Equip the individual with acceptable steps to take instead of misbehaving (e.g., options to withdraw from a situation or to try relaxation techniques)
6. Enhance the individual's motivation and skills for overcoming behavior problems (including altering negative attitudes toward school)

II. Anticipating Misbehavior

A. Personalize Classroom Structure for High Risk Students
1. Identify underlying motivation for misbehavior
2. Design curricula to consist primarily of activities that are a good match with the identified individual's intrinsic motivation and developmental capability
3. Provide extra support and direction so the identified individual can cope with difficult situations (including steps that can be taken instead of misbehaving)

B. Develop Consequences for Misbehavior that are Perceived by Students as Logical (i.e., that are perceived by the student as reasonable fair, and nondenigrating reactions which do not reduce one's sense of autonomy)

III. During Misbehavior

A. Try to base response on understanding of underlying motivation (if uncertain, start with assumption the misbehavior is unintentional)

B. Reestablish a calm and safe atmosphere
1. Use understanding of student's underlying motivation for misbehaving to clarify what occurred (if feasible, involve participants in discussion of events)
2. Validate each participant's perspective and feelings
3. Indicate how the matter will be resolved emphasizing use of previously agreed upon logical consequences that have been personalized in keeping with understanding of underlying motivation
4. If the misbehavior continues, revert to a firm but nonauthoritarian statement indicating it must stop or else the student will have to be suspended
5. As a last resort use crises back-up resources
   a. If appropriate, ask student's classroom friends to help
   b. Call for help from identified back-up personnel
6. Throughout the process, keep others calm by dealing with the situation with a calm and protective demeanor

IV. After Misbehavior

A. Implement Discipline -- Logical Consequences/ Punishment
1. Objectives in using consequences
   a. Deprive student of something s/he wants
   b. Make student experience something s/he doesn't want
2. Forms of consequences
   a. Removal/deprivation (e.g., loss of privileges, removal from activity)
   b. Reprimands (e.g., public censure)
   c. Reparations (e.g., of damaged or stolen property)
   d. Recantations (e.g., apologies, plans for avoiding future problems)

B. Discuss the Problem with Parents
1. Explain how they can avoid exacerbating the problem
2. Mobilize them to work preventively with school

C. Work Toward Prevention of Further Occurrences (see I & II)

individual from school, such punishment takes the form of a decision to do something to the student that he or she does not want done. In addition, a demand for future compliance usually is made, along with threats of harsher punishment if compliance is not forthcoming. And the discipline may be administered in ways that suggest the student is seen as an undesirable person. As students get older, suspension increasingly comes into play. Indeed, suspension remains one of the most common disciplinary responses for the transgressions of secondary students.

As with many emergency procedures, the benefits of using punishment may be offset by many negative consequences. These include increased negative attitudes toward school and school personnel which often lead to behavior problems, anti-social acts, and various mental health problems. Disciplinary procedures also are associated with dropping out of school. It is not surprising, then, that some concerned professionals refer to extreme disciplinary practices as "pushout" strategies.

(Relatedly, a large literature points to the negative impact of various forms of parental discipline on internalization of values and of early harsh discipline on child aggression and formation of a maladaptive social information processing style. And a significant correlation has been found between corporeal punishment of adolescents and depression, suicide, alcohol abuse, and wife-beating.)

Logical Consequences

Guidelines for managing misbehavior usually stress that discipline should be reasonable, fair, and nondenigrating. Motivation theory stresses that "positive, best-practice approaches" are disciplinary acts recipients experience as legitimate reactions that neither denigrate one's sense of worth nor reduce one's sense of autonomy. To these ends, discussions of classroom management practices usually emphasize establishing and administering logical consequences. This idea plays out best in situations where there are naturally-occurring consequences (e.g., if you touch a hot stove, you get burned).

In classrooms, there may be little ambiguity about the rules; unfortunately, the same often cannot be said about "logical" penalties. Even when the consequence for a particular rule infraction has been specified ahead of time, its logic may be more in the mind of the teacher than in the eye of the students. In the recipient's view, any act of discipline may be experienced as punitive -- unreasonable, unfair, denigrating, disempowering.

Basically, consequences involve depriving students of things they want and/or making them experience something they don't want. Consequences take the form of (a) removal/deprivation (e.g., loss of privileges, removal

Defining and Categorizing Discipline Practices

Two mandates capture much of current practice:

(a) schools must teach self-discipline to students;

(b) teachers must learn to use disciplinary practices effectively to deal with misbehavior.

Knoff (1987) offers three definitions of discipline as applied in schools: "(a) ... punitive intervention; (b) a means of suppressing or eliminating inappropriate behavior, of teaching or reinforcing appropriate behavior, and of redirecting potentially inappropriate behavior toward acceptable ends; and (c) ..a process of self-control whereby the (potentially) misbehaving student applies techniques that interrupt inapprop-riate behavior, and that replace it with acceptable behavior". In contrast to the first definition which specifies discipline as punishment, Knoff sees the other two as nonpunitive or as he calls them "positive, best-practices approaches."

Hyman, Flannagan, & Smith (1982) categorize models shaping disciplinary practices into 5 groups:

- psychodynamic-interpersonal models
- behavioral models
- sociological models
- eclectic-ecological models
- human-potential models

Wolfgang & Glickman (1986) group disciplinary practices in terms of a process-oriented framework:

- relationship-listening models (e.g., Gordon's Teacher Effectiveness Training, values clarification approaches, transactional analysis)
- confronting-contracting models (e.g., Dreikurs' approach,, Glasser's Reality Therapy)
- rules/rewards-punishment (e.g., Canter's Assertive Discipline)

Bear (1995) offers 3 categories in terms of the goals of the practice -- with a secondary nod to processes, strategies and techniques used to reach the goals:

- preventive discipline models (e.g., models that stress classroom management, prosocial behavior, moral/character education, social problem solving, peer mediation, affective education and communication models)
- corrective models (e.g., behavior management, Reality Therapy)
- treatment models (e.g., social skills training, aggression replacement training, parent management training, family therapy, behavior therapy).

from an activity), (b) reprimands (e.g., public censure), (c) reparations (e.g., to compensate for losses caused by misbehavior), and (d) recantations (e.g., apologies, plans for avoiding future problems). For instance, teachers commonly deal with acting out behavior by removing a student from an activity. To the teacher, this step (often described as "time out") may be a logical way to stop the student from disrupting others by isolating him or her, or the logic may be that the student needs a cooling off period. It may be reasoned that (a) by misbehaving the student has shown s/he does not deserve the privilege of participating (assuming the student likes the activity) and (b) the loss will lead to improved behavior in order to avoid future deprivation.

Most teachers have little difficulty explaining their reasons for using a consequence. However, if the intent really is to have students perceive consequences as logical and nondebilitating, it seems logical to determine whether the recipient sees the discipline as a legitimate response to misbehavior. Moreover, it is well to recognize the difficulty of administering consequences in a way that minimizes the negative impact on a student's perceptions of self. Although the intent is to stress that it is the misbehavior and its impact that are bad, the student can too easily experience the process as a characterization of her or him as a bad person.

Organized sports such as youth basketball and soccer offer a prototype of an established and accepted set of consequences administered with recipient's perceptions given major consideration. In these arenas, the referee is able to use the rules and related criteria to identify inappropriate acts and apply penalties; moreover, s/he is expected to do so with positive concern for maintaining the youngster's dignity and engendering respect for all.

For discipline to be perceived as a logical consequence, steps must be taken to convey that a response is not a personally motivated act of power (e.g., an authoritarian action) and, indeed, is a rational and socially agreed upon reaction. Also, if the intent is a long-term reduction in future misbehavior, it may be necessary to take time to help students learn right from wrong, to respect others rights, and to accept responsibility.

From a motivational perspective, it is essential that logical consequences are based on understanding of a student's perceptions and are used in ways that minimize negative repercussions. To these ends, motivation theorists suggest (a) establishing a publicly accepted set of consequences to increase the likelihood they are experienced as socially just (e.g., reasonable, firm but fair) and (b) administering such consequences in ways that allow students to maintain a sense of integrity, dignity, and autonomy. These ends are best achieved under conditions where students are "empowered" (e.g., are involved in deciding how to make improvements and avoid future misbehavior and have opportunities for positive involvement and reputation building at school).

Social Skills Training

Suppression of undesired acts does not necessarily lead to desired behavior. It is clear that more is needed than classroom management and disciplinary practices.

Is the answer social skills training? After all, poor social skills are identified as a symptom (a correlate) and contributing factor in a wide range of educational, psychosocial, and mental health problems.

Programs to improve social skills and interpersonal problem solving are described as having promise both for prevention and correction. However, reviewers tend to be cautiously optimistic because studies to date have found the range of skills acquired are quite limited and generalizability and maintenance of outcomes are poor. This is the case for training of specific skills (e.g., what to say and do in a specific situation), general strategies (e.g., how to generate a wider range of interpersonal problem-solving options), as well as efforts to develop cognitive-affective orientations (e.g., empathy training). Based on a review of social skills training over the past two decades, Mathur and Rutherford (1996) conclude that individual studies show effectiveness, but outcomes continue to lack generalizability and social validity. (While their focus is on social skills training for students with emotional and behavior disorders, their conclusions hold for most populations.)

See the *Lessons Learned* on p. 6 for a synthesis of curriculum content areas for fostering social and emotional development. For a comprehensive bibliography of articles, chapters, books, and programs on social skills and social competence of children and youth, see Quinn, Mathur, and Rutherford, 1996. Also, see Daniel Goleman's (1995) book on *Emotional Intelligence* which is stimulating growing interest in ways to facilitate social and emotional competence.

Addressing Underlying Motivation

Beyond discipline and skills training is a need to address the roots of misbehavior, especially the underlying motivational bases for such behavior. Consider students who spend most of the day trying to avoid all or part of the instructional program. An intrinsic motivational interpretation of the avoidance behavior of many of these youngsters is that it reflects their perception that school is not a place where they experience a sense of competence, autonomy, and or relatedness to others. Over time, these perceptions develop into strong motivational dispositions and related patterns of misbehavior.

Misbehavior can reflect proactive (approach) or reactive (avoidance) motivation. Noncooperative, disruptive, andaggressive behavior patterns that are proactive tend to be rewarding and satisfying to an individual because the behavior itself is exciting or because the behavior leads to desired outcomes (e.g., peer recognition, feelings of competence or autonomy). Intentional

negative behavior stemming from such approach motivation can be viewed as *pursuit of deviance*.

Of course, misbehavior in the classroom often also is reactive, stemming from avoidance motivation. This behavior can be viewed as *protective reactions*. Students with learning problems can be seen as motivated to avoid and to protest against being forced into situations in which they cannot cope effectively. For such students, many teaching and therapy situations are perceived in this way. Under such circumstances, individuals can be expected to react by trying to protect themselves from the unpleasant thoughts and feelings that the situations stimulate (e.g., feelings of incompetence, loss of autonomy, negative relationships). In effect, the misbehavior reflects efforts to cope and defend against aversive experiences. The actions may be direct or indirect and include defiance, physical and psychological withdrawal, and diversionary tactics.

Interventions for such problems begin with major program changes. From a motivational perspective, the aims are to (a) prevent and overcome negative attitudes toward school and learning, (b) enhance motivational readiness for learning and overcoming problems, (c) maintain intrinsic motivation throughout learning and problem solving, and (d) nurture the type of continuing motivation that results in students engaging in activities away from school that foster maintenance, generalization, and expansion of learning and problem solving. Failure to attend to motivational concerns in a comprehensive, normative way results in approaching passive and often hostile students with practices that instigate and exacerbate problems. After making broad programmatic changes to the degree feasible, intervention with a misbehaving student involves remedial steps directed at underlying factors. For instance, with intrinsic motivation in mind, the following assessment questions arise:

- Is the misbehavior unintentional or intentional?
- If it is intentional, is it reactive or proactive?
- If the misbehavior is reactive, is it a reaction to threats to self-determination, competence, or relatedness?
- If it is proactive, are there other interests that might successfully compete with satisfaction derived from deviant behavior?

In general, intrinsic motivational theory suggests that corrective interventions for those misbehaving reactively requires steps designed to reduce reactance and enhance positive motivation for participating in an intervention. For youngsters highly motivated to pursue deviance (e.g., those who proactively engage in criminal acts), even more is needed. Intervention might focus on helping these youngsters identify and follow through on a range of valued, socially appropriate alternatives to deviant activity. From the theoretical perspective presented above, such alternatives must be capable of producing greater feelings of self-determination, competence, and relatedness than usually result from the youngster's deviant actions. To these ends, motivational analyses of the problem can point to corrective steps for implementation by teachers, clinicians, parents, or students themselves. (For more on approaching misbehavior from a motivational perspective, see Adelman and Taylor, 1990; 1993; Deci & Ryan, 1985.)

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Lessons Learned
Curriculum Content for Enhancing Social and Emotional Functioning

With the burgeoning of programs focused on preventing and correcting social and emotional problems, it helps to have a synthesis of fundamental areas of competence. W.T. Grant Foundation (in the 1980s) funded a five year project that brought together a consortium of professionals to review the best programs and create such a synthesis.* The following is their list of core social and emotional competence:

Emotional

- identifying and labeling feelings
- expressing feelings
- assessing the intensity of feelings
- managing feelings
- delaying gratification
- controlling impulses
- reducing stress
- knowing the difference between feelings and actions

Cognitive

- self-talk -- conducting an "inner dialogue" as a way to cope with a topic or challenge or reinforce one's own behavior
- reading and interpreting social cues -- for example, recognizing social influences on behavior and seeing oneself in the perspective of the larger community
- using steps for problem-solving and decision-making -- for instance, controlling impulses, setting goals, identifying alternative actions, anticipating consequences
- understanding the perspectives of others
- understanding behavioral norms (what is and is not acceptable behavior)
- a positive attitude toward life
- self-awareness -- for example, developing realistic expectations about oneself

Behavioral

- nonverbal -- communicating through eye contact, facial expressiveness, tone of voice, gestures, etc.
- verbal -- making clear requests, responding effectively to criticism, resisting negative influences, listening to others, helping others, participating in positive peer groups

*W.T. Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence (I 992). Drug and alcohol prevention curriculum. In J.D. Hawkins, et al. (Eds), *Communities that care*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The W. T. Grant consortium list is designed with prevention in mind. It can be compared and contrasted with frameworks suggested for training children manifesting behavior problems. Below is the set of skills prescribed by M.L. Bloomquist (1996) in *Skills training for children with behavioral disorders*. After stressing the importance of (a) increased parental involvement, (b) greater use of positive reinforcement, and (c) enhanced positive family interaction skills, Bloomquist details the following as areas parents should focus on with their children.

- compliance (listening and obeying adults' directives)
- following rules (adhering to formal rules) .
- social behavior skills (making and keeping friends)
- social and general problem-solving skills (stopping and thinking before working on a problem, thinking and doing in a step-by-step manner)
- coping with anger (stopping outbursts)
- self-directed academic behavior skills (organizing work, budgeting time, self-monitoring and staying on task, using study skills)
- understanding and expressing feelings (increasing one's "feelings vocabulary," observing and practicing awareness and expression of feelings,
- thinking helpful thoughts (identifying one's negative thoughts, understanding how they influence one's emotions, strategies to change negative thoughts in order to experience more positive emotions)
- self-esteem (coming to evaluate oneself positively as a result of developing skills, experiencing positive feedback, and positive family interactions)

With increasing interest in facilitating social and emotional development has come new opportunities for collaboration. A prominent example is the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) established by the Yale Child Study Center in 1994. CASEL's mission is to promote social and emotional learning as an integral part of education in schools around the world. Those interested in this work can contact Roger Weissberg, Executive Director, Dept. of Psychology, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 W. Harrison St., Chicago, IL 60607-7137. Ph. (312) 413-1008.

MATT'S ALWAYS BOTHERING ME DURING CLASS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
HE JUST WANTS ATTENTION. IT'S BEST TO IGNORE HIM.
I'VE TRIED THAT. NOW HOW DO I GET HIM TO LET GO OF MY LEG?